



# Community Organizations Active in Disasters

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Emergency Management Division  
Washington Military Department

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## Purpose

There are many kinds of disasters, each having different magnitudes and differing impacts on the lives of the survivors. When they happen, neighbors and community organizations want to reach out and help, but it is not always easy. Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) can help a community make the best use of its resources in a disaster. COADs are effective because local organizations are in the best position to mobilize and bring practical and timely assistance to disaster victims. It stands then, that the mission of a COAD is to organize and deploy community resources, in an effective and timely manner, in response to the needs of community disaster survivors.

## Background

Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WAVOAD), in partnership with the Washington Emergency Management Division, developed the COAD program.

A 12-minute video entitled "Learning to Dance: Building a COAD in your Community," was produced to help local communities understand the benefits of community organizations who organize before disaster strikes. The video draws on the experiences of Benton City in the Hanford range fire in June of 2000. The fire burned 164,000 acres and destroyed 12 homes, but the volunteer response was not well organized.

A [concept paper](#) is also available that defines a COAD, provides a distinction between a COAD and state Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), defines the role of emergency management and a COAD, and finally, outlines planning considerations that need to be in place to successfully implement and sustain a COAD.

## Benefits

No two disasters are alike. The impact on each victim is different. The needs of each are unique and often unmet. However, a community that brings all of its resources together in a COAD can effectively respond to the needs of disaster victims in a timely way, thereby reducing the social and economic impact of the disaster.

## Contact

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